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September 15, 2014

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### **Philadelphia Inquirer**

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[The friends pols keep](#)

### **pennlive.com**

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Verizon Communications Inc. could launch a digital video service over the Internet by the middle of next year, Chief Executive Lowell McAdam said at an investor conference on Thursday. Mr. McAdam said the carrier has much of the technology ready to launch the service and is nearing agreements with major content companies, which until recently were more skeptical of licensing content for delivery over the Internet.

The need to connect with millennials who want to view TV shows and movies over the Internet is changing the tone of discussions, he said. "I think over-the-top video is right around the corner," Mr. McAdam said, referring to delivering video via the Internet rather than paid services like cable or its own FiOS offering. "We've got the assets in place, and I don't feel we need an awful lot more." Conversations with content companies, he said, have "moved from almost a stiff arm to much more of an embrace." Mr. McAdam said he is having almost monthly conversations with top executives from major content providers, including networks ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX, as well as companies such as DreamWorks and some digital startups like Awesomeness TV. "Over the last six months to a year, that dialogue is changing dramatically," he said.

On Wednesday, CBS Corp. Chief Executive Leslie Moonves said at the same conference that the company in general isn't averse to being available on so-called over-the-top services. On Thursday, 21st Century Fox Inc. Chief Operating Officer Chase Carey said the company is talking with a lot of players about such offerings and that the issue is more one of timing than whether they will materialize at all. Verizon is envisioning a service that would be akin to Netflix, Amazon and Hulu but also would likely stream some live channels. Mr. McAdam said it would deliver content from major broadcasters and live sporting events to smartphones via a technology called multicasting, which avoids congesting the network because it essentially allows the carrier to broadcast content over a single stream of airwaves that consumers can tune in to. "No one wants to have 300 channels on your wireless device," he said. "I think everyone understands that it will go to a la carte. The question is what does that transition look like."

Separately, Mr. McAdam indicated he is more open now than before to

expanding the company's FiOS broadband Internet service in new markets. Verizon began building out FiOS in 2004 but stopped expanding into new markets the past few years. Verizon also is open to selling some of its rural wired network assets and some of its towers, Mr. McAdam said. He ruled out converting the company's fiber assets into a REIT, a tax-free investment structure, which regional carrier Windstream Holdings Inc. did this summer. – **Wall Street Journal**

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French cable operator Numericable Group SA will launch an offer Monday giving subscribers free access to hundreds of TV series in a bid to counter the arrival of Netflix in France. Numericable—owned by cable investor Patrick Drahi —will give customers of its fiber box access to about 3,000 episodes of TV series, including "Mad Men" and popular French series such as "Plus belle la vie," Deputy Chief Executive Jérôme Yomtov said. "We will start with 3,000 episodes of TV series a month and add movies a few months from now," he added.

The move by Numericable, which dubbed the service "SérieFlix" internally, is an attempt to avoid losing customers to Netflix, which is set to be launched in France on Monday. Netflix's arrival has sparked much criticism in France, where politicians lament the creeping influence of U.S. culture and business. French film producers had warned of an "implosion of our cultural model" with the arrival of the U.S. company. French telecom operators have also shown resistance to Netflix's launch in France. They have refused to let Netflix offer its service via their triple-play boxes, the most common way in France for people to watch TV.

Nevertheless, in other countries, Netflix has attracted large numbers of subscribers with very few deals integrating it into telecom set-top boxes. In the U.S. many cable operators have long resisted integrating Netflix or have tried to slow its growth by creating rival services similar to Numericable's. Netflix can be viewed on its website and via apps on Apple and Android devices, as well as on smart TVs, game consoles and other third-party TV boxes.

It is unclear at this stage how other French operators, including market leader Orange SA, Bouygues SA's telecom unit Bouygues Telecom and Iliad SA, will react to Netflix's arrival. Spokeswomen for Bouygues Telecom, Orange and Iliadthem declined to comment Sunday on Numericable's new offer. Orange CEO Stéphane Richard said on French radio last week that for now the operator won't let Netflix offer its service on its boxes but that this could change depending on the success of Netflix's offer. Vivendi SA's pay TV Canal Plus meanwhile has started to fight back on its own. Canal Plus, which already has about 500,000 subscribers for a Netflix-like competitor called CanalPlay, is launching a new offline-viewing feature for the service and bulking up its library of French TV shows and movies to highlight its domestic roots. – **Wall Street Journal**

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Internet freedom activists are holding a rally Monday outside the Comcast Center in Philadelphia to protest Comcast's proposed merger with Time Warner Cable. The rally, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. at 1701 John F. Kennedy Blvd, is organized by Free Press, a nonpartisan group that advocates to preserve open Internet communication and free speech. The group is demanding protections for net neutrality, and

the rally will urge the Federal Communications Commission to adopt rules that prevent broadband providers like Comcast and Verizon from discriminating against online content and services. Monday is the FCC's deadline for public comments on the matter. Speakers at the rally include Chris Rabb, a professor at Temple's Fox School of Business, as well as members of Free Press and other allied organizations. – *philly.com*



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